Let Us Learn Madagascar

Expanding and improving girls' education

Education holds the key to a better life for children and adolescents worldwide and brings with it prospects of a life with less poverty, better health and a brighter future. Yet, there are multiple, complex reasons why children do not attend or drop out of school. Let Us Learn, a UNICEF initiative launched in 2011, addresses inequalities in education by reaching out-of-school children, expanding girls’ education and improving the quality of education. Five countries—Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Liberia, Madagascar and Nepal—are targeting the most vulnerable children by focusing on equity in both programming and monitoring of results.

GLOBAL ACHIEVEMENTS

• Let Us Learn has reached more than 115,000 girls across all five countries
• Let Us Learn provided training for 2,649 teachers across all five countries

LET US LEARN MADAGASCAR

After reviewing the first years of the program in Madagascar, it became evident that the program needed a more gender-equitable response that extended beyond the education sector and incorporated a more holistic, child-rights based approach. Since January 2015, Let Us Learn has incorporated social protection, child protection and communication for development into its focus on improving education outcomes for both boys and girls.

However, the Let Us Learn program’s most pressing challenge in Madagascar remains high levels of poverty, which likely force families to resort to negative coping strategies, such as taking their children out of school. This challenge is being addressed through the use of conditional cash transfers. To further mitigate the risk of poverty hindering education, schools and teachers will receive a school package of materials to reduce the financial burden on households. Having seen that regional differences affect the implementation of Let Us Learn, each region will now be rolling out the package of activities according to their needs, capacities and priorities.
Zonta International has committed US$1 million to the U.S. Fund for UNICEF from 2016 to 2018 to support the Let Us Learn initiative in Madagascar to address barriers to girls' education in Madagascar.

Although the number of children accessing primary school in Madagascar has increased over the past several years, only two thirds of primary school students transition to secondary school. The same number of girls and boys start secondary school, but girls drop out at faster rates.

More than 97 percent of teachers do not have any professional teaching diploma, which contributes to high repetition rates. Violence in schools is an additional factor that increases school dropout rates.

In addition, widespread poverty has forced many children into child labor. Only 44 percent of children who work attend school (compared to 74 percent of those who do not work). Yet for every additional completed year of study, individual incomes increase by 11 – 14 percent, underscoring the importance of completing secondary education.

Let Us Learn in Madagascar is focused on addressing exclusion and low transition rates from primary to secondary school and reaching out-of-school children to significantly reduce levels of poverty. In Madagascar, the following strategies are part of the equity approach that is designed to reach out-of-school children, improve quality education and encourage the continuation of studies:

- **Conditional cash transfers** target the poorest families to reduce the burden of school costs. Payments are conditional on children remaining in school.

- **Communication for Development (C4D):** UNICEF has established platforms to carry out specific strategies that take into account regional differences and the different actors in each region in order to address the socio-cultural barriers that prevent children from going to school and staying in school.

- **Catch-up classes** are organized during school breaks and holidays so that children who have dropped out of school can access supportive educational opportunities that help them return to school.

- **Advocacy** with regional education authorities and school directors has raised awareness to reduce the stigmatization of girls who are pregnant and who have had children and let them return to school.

- **UNICEF aims to improve the quality of education** by supporting teacher training and providing teaching materials and pedagogical support. To ensure continuous pedagogical development, Let Us Learn has prepared 48 regional trainers, reviewed the school program and integrated 360 teachers in a teacher’s network.

---

**SUCCESSES IN MADAGASCAR**

(January 2015 – June 2016)

- **126,000 children** (including **59,005 girls**) benefited in all public lower secondary schools from sports equipment and learning materials provided by the Let Us Learn initiative in Madagascar.
- **1,690 teachers** received pedagogical and didactic training in their respective subjects, as well as child rights training to address the problem of gender-based violence in schools.
- **2,200 children** received conditional cash transfers.
- **3,000 out-of-school children** benefited from catch-up classes.
- **10 new classrooms** were constructed, benefiting **500 children**.

---